United Nations

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/1626
19 April 1994

TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General asks NATO to authorize use of air strikes in response to attacks against civilians in safe areas in Bosnia and Herzogovina; Special Envoy Akashi says he will not meet with Bosnian Serb leader without cease-fire in Gorazde and release of detained United Nations personnel.

+ Secretary-General hails breakthrough agreement on upcoming elections between President de Klerk, ANC leader Mandela and Chief Buthelezi.

+ Georgian and Abkhaz delegations meet in Geneva, under chairmanship of Special Envoy Brunner, to discuss political and constitutional issues of comprehensive settlement of conflict.

+ Special Commission completes destruction of Iraq's bulk stocks of chemical warfare agents and precursor chemicals.

+ Secretary-General appoints Joseph Connor, United States national, as Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management from 1 May; appoints Carlos Fortin of Chile as Officer-in-Charge of UNCTAD.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has asked the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to authorize the use of air strikes against artillery, mortar positions or tanks attacking civilians in safe areas in Bosnia and Herzogovina. In a letter to NATO Secretary-General Manfred Wörner, Mr. Boutros-Ghali noted that permission for such air strikes had already been given regarding Sarajevo and said that the tragic events in Gorazde demonstrated the need for the NATO Council to take a similar decision on the other safe areas.

The Secretary-General had taken that initiative in the belief that prior approval by the NATO Council would shorten the response time for air strikes, according to a United Nations spokesman. The request would also test the political will of NATO members regarding the use of air strikes to protect the safe areas, he added.

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In a related development, Special Envoy Yasushi Akashi yesterday said that further meetings with Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic would not be fruitful. In a letter to Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic, Mr. Akashi noted that Gorazde was still being shelled very heavily despite Mr. Karadzic's repeated commitments to a cease-fire, and said that United Nations premises were being deliberately targeted in the attacks. Mr. Akashi went on to say that while he still believed in dialogue, he would not meet with the Bosnian Serb leader and President Milosevic until there was a total cease-fire in and around Gorazde and United Nations personnel detained by the Bosnian Serbs were released.

Meanwhile in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a large number of Bosnian Serbs soldiers today seized anti-aircraft guns being guarded by French troops from the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) within the Sarajevo exclusion zone.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has welcomed the breakthrough agreement reached today between Frederik Willem de Klerk, President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela, President of the African National Congress of South Africa (ANC), and Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, Chief Minister of KwaZulu and President of the Inkhata Freedom Party. The Secretary-General congratulated them on the agreement, which deals with participation by the major parties in the upcoming democratic elections. He hoped that it would ensure that the elections would take place in calm and peaceful conditions.

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A meeting on political and constitutional issues of a comprehensive settlement of the Georgian/Abkhaz conflict began today in Geneva under the chairmanship of Special Envoy Edouard Brunner. In addition to the delegations from the Georgian and Abkhaz sides, representatives from the Russian Federation and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) are attending the meeting, which is expected to last three days.

The meeting is being held in accordance with the Declaration on measures for a political settlement of the Georgian/Abkhaz conflict, which was signed by the two parties on 4 April. Meetings have already been held to discuss issues relating to refugees and displaced persons, and military aspects of a possible peace-keeping operation in Abkhazia. In a Presidential statement on 8 April, the Security Council stressed the need for progress on a political settlement in the next round of talks between the two sides, so that it might consider establishing such a force.

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The Special Commission on the disarmement of Iraq has completed the destruction of the country's bulk stocks of chemical warfare agents and

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precursor chemicals. The Commission's Chemical Destruction Group destroyed the remaining stocks of three precursor chemicals -- white phosphorous, toluene and hydrogen fluoride -- and some mustard-filled artillery shells.

The Group is now concentrating on the destruction of chemical weapons production equipment which has been collected at the Muthanna site. The Commission will then send a team of experts to survey the site, using sensors to ensure that all relevant items have been destroyed and that no chemical hazards remain there. Another team, to be led by the Chairman of the Chemical Weapons Destruction Advisory Panel, will conduct a final inspection and formally hand the site back to the Iraqi authorities.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has appointed Joseph E. Connor, a United States national, as Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management, effective 1 May. Mr. Connor will be responsible to the Secretary-General for all financial and personnel matters and for ensuring an integrated approach to managerial issues within the Secretariat. He is currently a Distinguished Professor at the Georgetown University School of Business and was Chairman of Price Waterhouse World Firm until 1993.

The Secretary-General has also appointed Carlos Fortin, a Chilean national, as Officer-in-Charge of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) pending the appointment of a new Secretary-General of the Conference.

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